

Cuba and Henry George

by MAX STONE

CUBA is going to give Henry George a real test. She is changing as quickly as possible to a completely planned economy. Every business, every service, large and small, right down to the bootblack, every farm, every plantation and every industry will have government direction. It will be told its price, its quota, its conditions. It will be under the overall direction of the Cuban National Bank.

This is of course the exact opposite of Henry George's free market. It will be, in effect, a controlled experiment in planned economy. Controlled, at least, as far as anything in economics can be controlled.

Castro began the regime with the usual popular measures—a cut in rent, price control, division of land—all the fallacies the people love so well. The distress this leads to, its effect on money, shortages and black markets may be slow in appearing.

But Cuba is an island and a small economy, and with a change so wide and immediate the effects should be explosive. Certainly within a year we will see a changed Cuba.

The first effect will be inflated money, and that will be blamed on Ol Man Debil USA who is doing something vicious and mysterious with his dollars. If Uncle Sam has horns now, he'll grow a forked tail beside.

The government will build model housing and housing will get worse. Movies of the beautiful modern apart-

ments will be shown to those who live in hovels, and it will content them. Cuban sugar and tobacco will rise in price but the world price won't; the reason, of course—a conspiracy led by American monopolists. They won't give in to this, but will exchange their sugar for Russian wampum. There will be a large and deep black market, and speculators and smugglers, if caught, might even get the firing squad. But it will continue despite these lessons.

Unemployment and token employment will grow, and as misery deepens, each step will be met with more control; and the deeper the control, the more will misery grow. Policing will grow more rigid and lead to tyranny. The old women who now worship his every TV breath, will begin to mutter and wonder does this young fool know what he's doing. From the old women it will spread to the kids, and Castro posters will sprout horns and cockeyes. When that happens, Castro would do well to seek a change of scene.

If Henry George is right, and this should happen, will people see this planned economy and this misery as cause and effect? No. A hundred other reasons will be found—corruption, graft, tyranny, a world conspiracy. Is there much chance of Henry George's free market capturing men's minds? Little. "Planned Control" has such a "modern" and "scientific" appeal. We can't forego the conceit that we can do it better than Nature.

HENRY GEORGE WINS A NEW FRIEND IN AFRICA

"I am happy to say that I have completed the first step in my study of political economy from the Henry George School of Social Science," wrote E. E. Okere of Lagos, Nigeria, to his Correspondence Course instructor in New York, Sol Luria. "I have found the lessons interesting and 'revolutionizing.' Every sentence, every word and every idea in *Progress and Poverty* is brimful of excitement and vivid with life."